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CEREBUS

MELMOTH

TWO

141
DEC.

Gerhard, with *Melmoth* set-design model outside the 'Vice-Presidence', Kitchener.

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

We're printing a Cerebus Preview of Scott McCloud's 24 hour comic in this issue. Seems like a perfect opportunity to air some of the differences between Scott and myself regarding the Bill of Rights, especially in light of the interview he and Steve Bissette did with Gary Groth on the subject of Creator's Rights.

Gary asked very early on in the interview about the right "to free movement of ourselves and our work between publishers." Scott quickly volunteered the opinion that this *didn't* mean that artists had the right to unilaterally break a contract.

On the contrary, I believe we have *exactly* that right. This particular exchange wouldn't have bothered me so much if it wasn't for the fact that Bill Loebs had taken *Journey* and gone to Gary Groth's Fantagraphics in mid-issue some years ago. As I said in *my* Comics Journal interview, I contacted our lawyer (Hi, Wilf) at that time and was informed of several courses of action we could take against Bill (and, not incidentally, against Fantagraphics) based on the contract we had with Bill. In considering it, however, I realized it was more important to me, 'Journey' and (most importantly) to Bill that he be happy with his publishing circumstances. If he *didn't* want Aardvark-Vanaheim publishing *Journey*, there was nothing to be served in taking corrective legal action (forcing him to do the book at AV) or punitive legal action (punishing him for "jumping" his contract). Legally it was an open and shut case and Bill was in the wrong. Morally and artistically (I believe) he was in the right. He had to decide what was best for *Journey* and himself . . . and *did* so.

I find it amusing (in a black, humourous sort of way) that Gary, who is so adamant about "his" artists fulfilling their contracts, found Bill Loebs jumping his AV contract quite within the boundaries of proper behavior. My assumption is that if Los Bros or Peter Bagge or Daniel Clowes ever decided they would be better served by, say, Tundra or Dark Horse, mid-way through production of an issue (already solicited for under the Fantagraphics banner) that Gary would agree they had the right to "free movement". If he *doesn't* believe that, bearing in mind the *Journey* situation as precedent, I would be interested in hearing his reasons in his 'Opening Shots' column.

There is altogether too much mis-placed loyalty in this field on the part of artists and writers (I believe). If you are thirsty and go into a convenience store and buy a Coke and drink it, that is the end of the transaction. The next time you are thirsty, do you feel 'guilty' because you went into another convenience store or bought something other than a Coke? It was Scott himself who came up with the right to offer a proposal to more than one publisher at a time. What could make more sense? Does Scott's current publisher get just *one* quote from *one* printer and then feel that they must give that printer *all* of their business because of some mis-placed sense of loyalty? No! They shop around for the best printer at the best price. All printers are not the same. All publishers are not the same. As a freelance artist your unemployment isn't covered, nor your medical insurance. Your taxes aren't deducted. You have no tenure or job security.

You are employed for the duration of a given project and after that you start over again at square one. And yet just about every freelancer feels he "owes" the company who publishes his work loyalty for all time; first refusal on any new project or idea; a percentage of all merchandising and ancillary rights.

Well, Scott. Let me say *this* about *that*.

It is one thing to write down "our rights as we conceive them to be and intend to preserve them." But if, having put all those things down on paper, you continue to function as an exclusive employee of a single company without even *contacting* the other companies (look at what Dark Horse has done with Frank Miller's work, offering him a deal so generous that Frank had to *insist that they take a larger cut of his action*) then I think you let down the next generation of comic book creator by saying one thing and doing another; creating the impression that Creator's Rights amount to mouthing high-minded platitudes and then conducting "business as usual" because some company gave you your "first break". Companies don't give artists their "first break" out of some happy philanthropic instinct, Scott. They do so because they think what you do can be profitable. And what you do *is* profitable. And *prestigious*. And a *critical success*. *Any* of the companies is always looking for those three things.

This is an honest disagreement between creators. If the "free movement" issue had not been addressed by Scott I would have been happy to leave the clause to speak for itself. As it is, I am glad to have an opportunity to define "free movement" as I see it.

I have the greatest respect for Scott and his considerable achievements in the comics field. I am not 'attacking' him here — just clarifying our disagreements for the benefit of those who are attempting to define their own beliefs relative to the Bill of Rights.

Okay?

Jnx_Scanz_HaCsA !!!

CEREBUS

NO. 141 DECEMBER 1990

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MELMOTH
a short story

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(Cerebus 139 to Cerebus 150)

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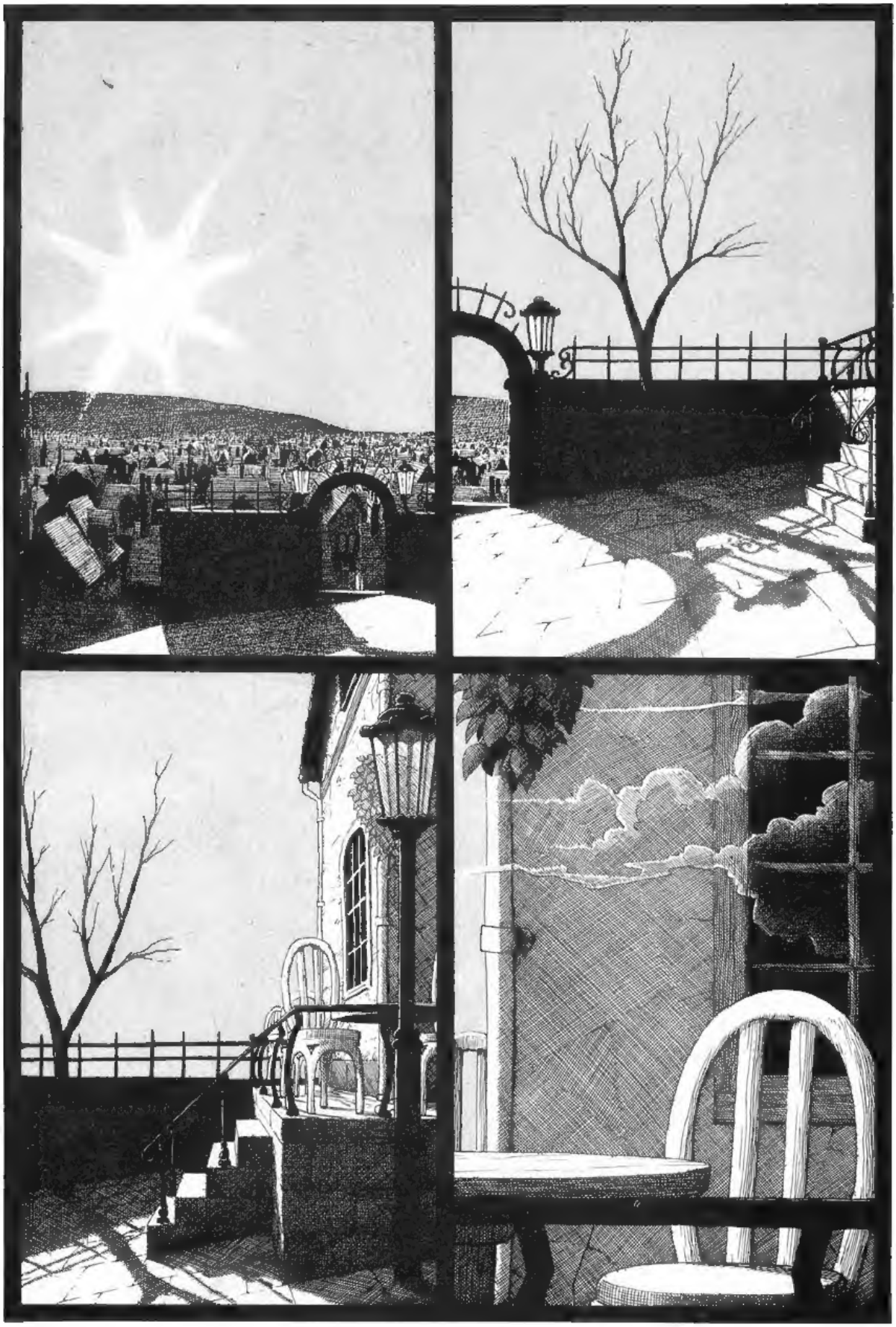


LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT HERE
YOU WANT TO GIVE ME THIS GOLD COIN
AYE.

AND YOU WANT A ROOM TO SLEEP IN.
AYE
AND FOOD ...
AYE.
FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE...
AYE...

PAL?
FLICK
FLICK
FLICK
YOU'VE GOT YOURSELF A DEAL.
AYE.

JANICE?
SKITCH SKITCH
JANICE, THERE'S A --
A--
A YOUNG FELLOW OUT FRONT WHO'D LIKE TO SEE A MENU...
I SAID "THERE'S A YOUNG FELLOW OUT FRONT WHO'D LIKE TO...
I HEARD YUH -- I AIN'T DEAF Y'KNOW

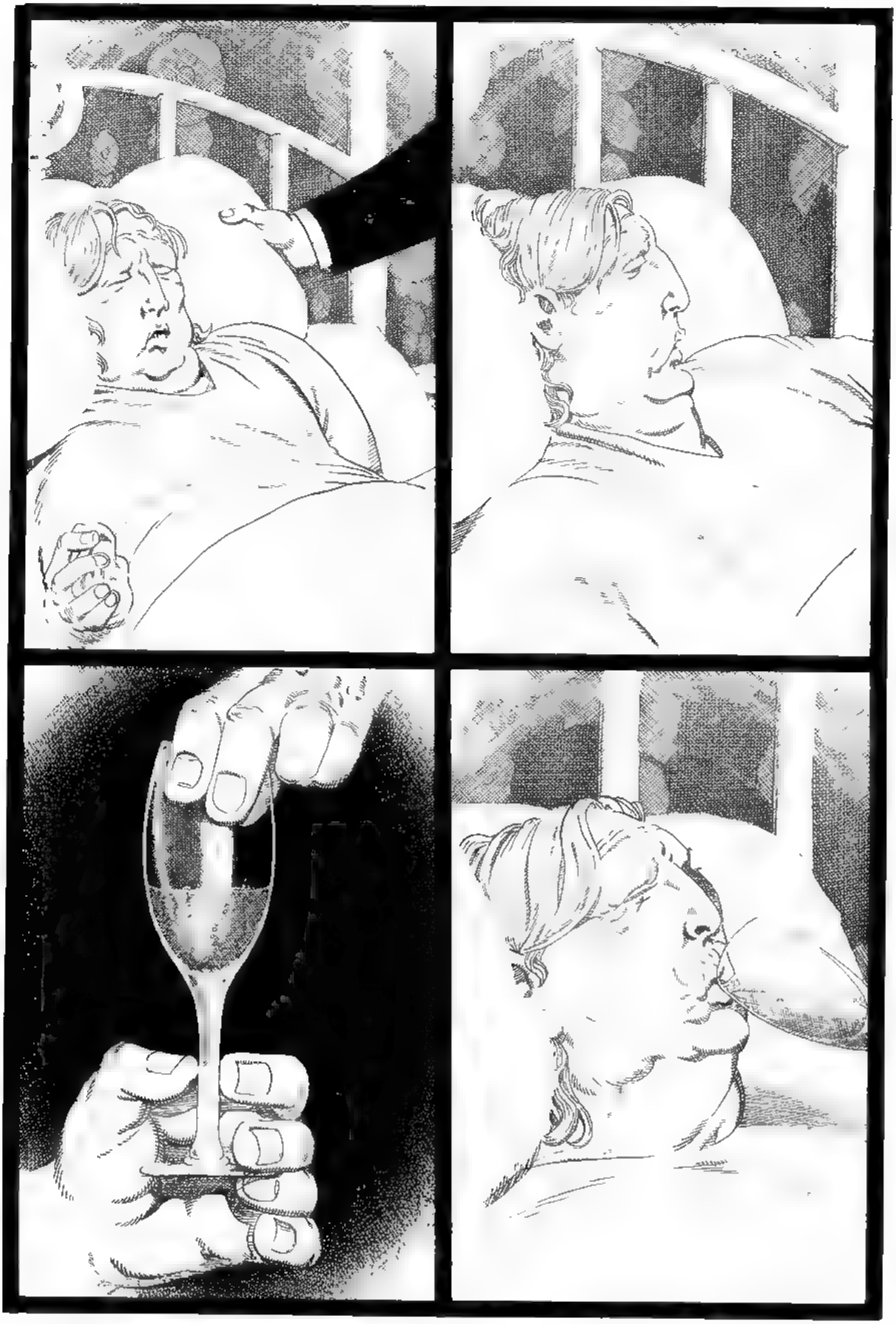
ALLRIGHT ALLRIGHT JEEZ.
AND DON'T YELL AT ME
D I N
C A F

He appeared comparatively well in bed.

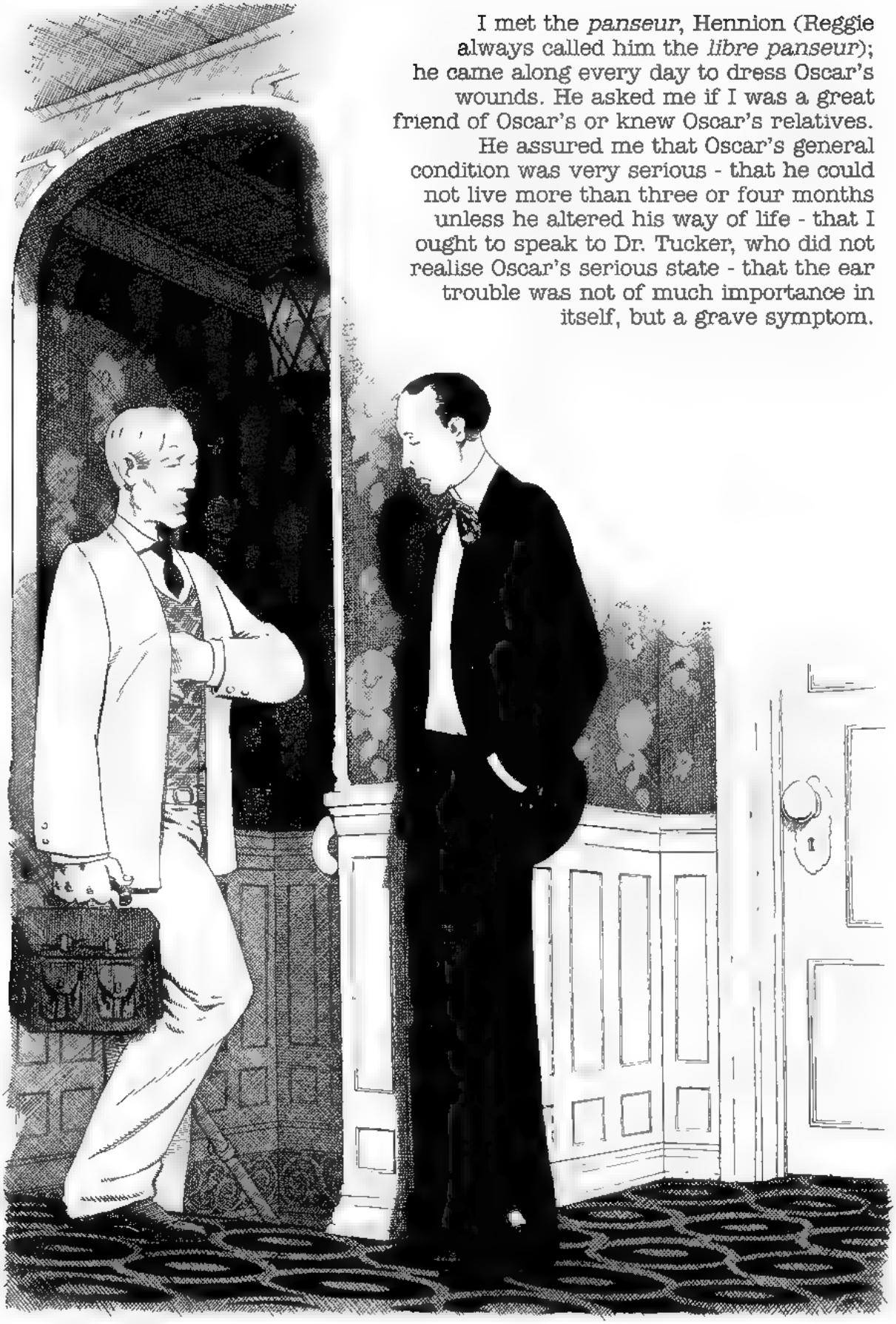
Next day I was not surprised to find Oscar suffering with a cold and great pain in his ear, and though he assured me his sufferings were dreadful, at the same time he shouted with laughter and told many stories against the doctor and himself.

"YOU DID SAY THAT I WAS TO HAVE A SMALL BOWL OF 'LEAFY GREENS' WITH EACH MEAL?"
HE AGREED THAT THAT HAD INDEED BEEN HIS RECOMMENDATION.
"AND"
"YOU HAVE ALSO SAID"
"IF I AM NOT MISTAKEN"
"THAT I MIGHT HAVE WITH MY MEALS"
"AS WELL"
"A SMALL GLASS OF SPIRITS?"
HE NODDED GRAVELY
"WELL,"
I SAID
"I FIND MYSELF A MERE FIVE DAYS BEHIND ON THE LEAFY GREENS'"
"AND SEVERAL WEEKS AHEAD ON THE SMALL GLASS OF SPIRITS."

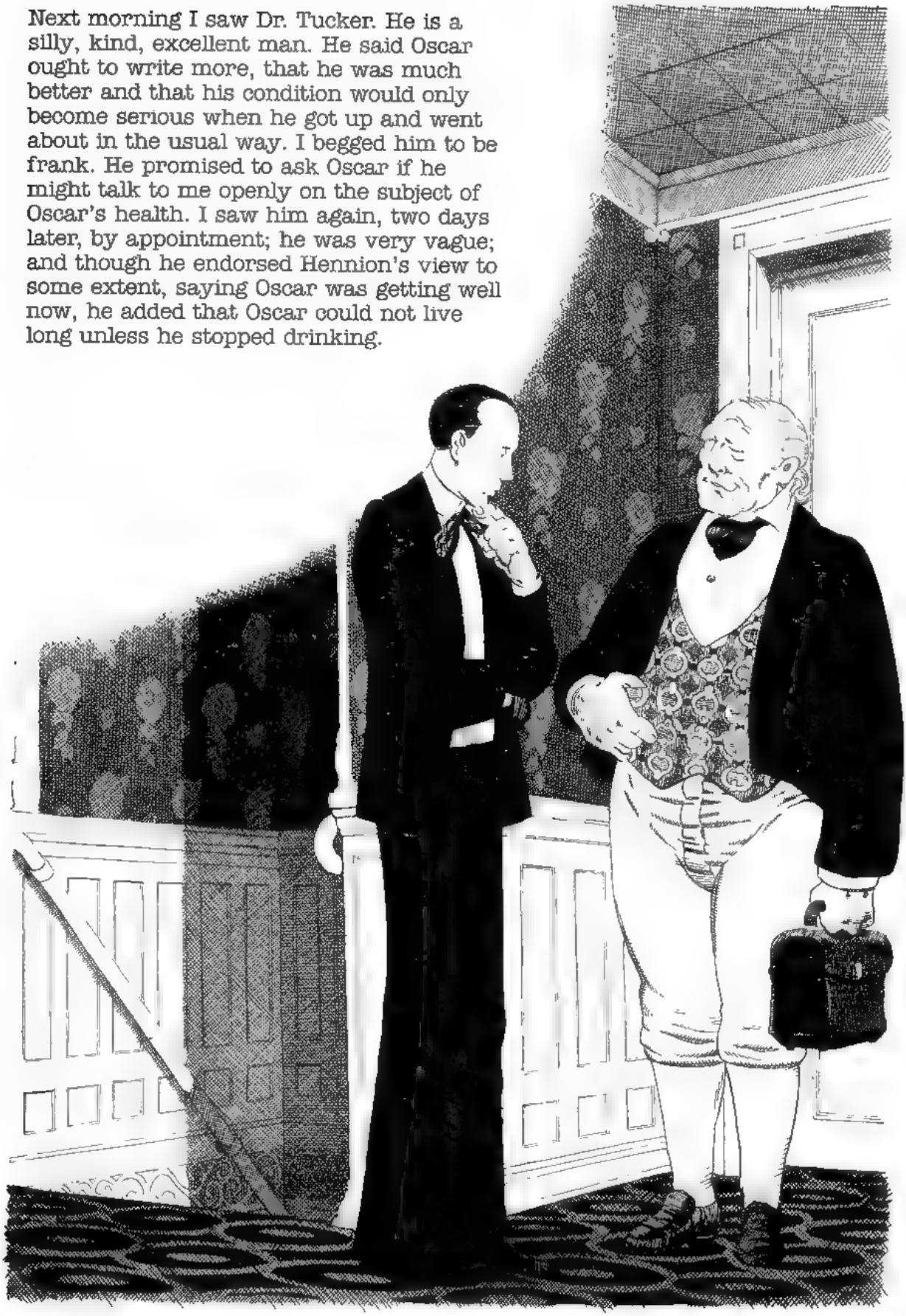
HAW HAW HAW
KAF KAF KAF
KAF KAF
KAF



I met the *panseur*, Hennion (Reggie always called him the *libre panseur*); he came along every day to dress Oscar's wounds. He asked me if I was a great friend of Oscar's or knew Oscar's relatives. He assured me that Oscar's general condition was very serious - that he could not live more than three or four months unless he altered his way of life - that I ought to speak to Dr. Tucker, who did not realise Oscar's serious state - that the ear trouble was not of much importance in itself, but a grave symptom.



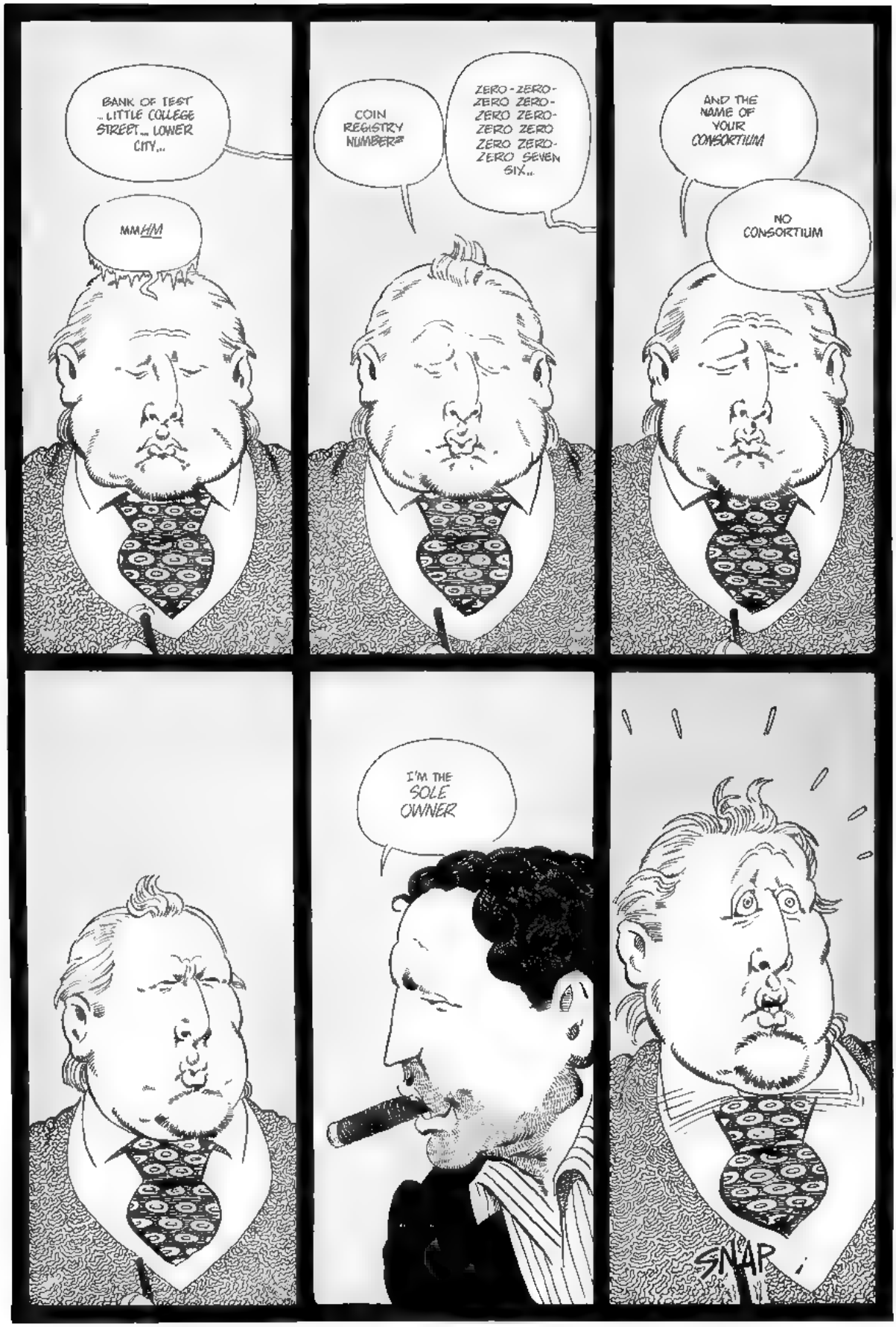
Next morning I saw Dr. Tucker. He is a silly, kind, excellent man. He said Oscar ought to write more, that he was much better and that his condition would only become serious when he got up and went about in the usual way. I begged him to be frank. He promised to ask Oscar if he might talk to me openly on the subject of Oscar's health. I saw him again, two days later, by appointment; he was very vague; and though he endorsed Hennion's view to some extent, saying Oscar was getting well now, he added that Oscar could not live long unless he stopped drinking.



HOTEL
KWEEK
SQUEE QUEE
KWEEK
SQUEE QUEE
KWEEK
QUEE QUEEE

KWEEK
THE WHOLE FRONT OF THE BUILDING TAKEN OFF ON THE FIRST FLOOR
FROM HERE
TO HERE
SQUEE QUEE
KWEEK
TWO MARBLE POSTS HOLDING UP THE SECOND FLOOR
SQUEE QUEE
BLACK MARBLE
WHITE MARBLE BAR ALONG THE BACK WALL...
BRASS FITTINGS
SQUEE QUEE
FLICK FLICK

KWEEK
WATERFALL WHERE THE DOOR IS RIGHT NOW
FLOOR TO CEIL NG MIRRORS ALL THE WAY AROUND
YOU GETTING ALL THIS?
MM
NOW, I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU NTEND PAYING FOR ALL THIS WITH INTEREST FROM A GOLD COIN.
THAT'S RIGHT, PAL.
FINANCIAL NST.TUTION2


BANK OF TEST ... LITTLE COLLEGE STREET... LOWER CITY...
MMM
COIN REGISTRY NUMBER?
ZERO-ZERO-ZERO ZERO-ZERO ZERO-ZERO ZERO ZERO ZERO-ZERO SEVEN SIX...
AND THE NAME OF YOUR CONSORTIUM
NO CONSORTIUM
I'M THE SOLE OWNER
SNAP

THE SOLE --2.
BUT-- BUT--
YOU COULDN'T POSSIBLY ...
THAT IS
IT'S HARDLY
I MEAN ONE WOULD NEVER THINK...
FLICK FLICK
THINK
THINK
I'M SURE WE CAN GET A COMPREHENSIVE QUOTE TO YOU
FIRST THING TOMORROW MORNING
ACTUALLY
ahhh--
TOMORROW MORNING'S BAD FOR ME
REAL BAD

THIS AFTERNOON
THIS AFTERNOON IS MUCH BETTER
WHY OF COURSE
A MAN WITH YOUR
HAVING ALL THAT ...
BEING 50...
I'M QUITE SURE I CAN HAVE THE BOYS GET SOMETHING TOGETHER BY LATE THIS AFTERNOON -- IT'S REALLY JUST A ...
EARLY THIS AFTERNOON.
EARLY THIS AFTERNOON -- OF COURSE! THAT'S WHAT I MEANT TO SAY...

EARLY
THIS AFTERNOON
I'LL BE RIGHT HERE.
SECONDS ON WHITE MARBLE AT ERCENT OF CURRENT MARKET VA VALUABLE TWO HUNDRED AND PERCENT MARK-UP OF LABOUR CHARGES PLUS KICKBACKS OF FROM THE DEMOLITION AND F CREW OF FIFTY PERCENTAGE P THE TENDER RECONDITIONING O THE RUSTED OUT FOUNTAININTO A WATERFALL AT FULL CURRENT RETAIL PLUS IMPORT DUTIES AND GOODS AND SERVICES TAX OF MODIFICATION OF INSTALATION FEES SALES TAX AND SHIPPIN AND LING CONSULTATION OF FEE LICENSES AND FULL SOLIC IGATORY VALUES ADDED COSTS AND PRODUCTION WITHIN INITIAL INVESTMENT LISTING PLUS OUTSTANDING DEBTS AND LEASES CARRIED INTO THE SECOND FISCAL QUARTER INTEREST CHARGES ON THE PRINCIPLE AND NETOWING AT THE TIME OF CLOSING AND COMPOUNDED AT THE P CURRENT ASSIGNMENT
FLICK FLICK
DINO CAFE

HEY THERE, PAL!
SO UH--
JANICE IS TAKING GOOD CARE OF YOU, IS SHE?
NAY...
ATTABOY!